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FBI Agents And Workers Bid Farewell To Webster

By Robert L. Koenig **UP**
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WASHINGTON — Hundreds of special agents and other workers gathered Wednesday in a courtyard of the Federal Bureau of Investigation to give a rousing send-off to departing director William H. Webster.

Webster — a former judge in St. Louis who was sworn in Tuesday as the director of central intelligence — returned to his old balliwick for the farewell ceremony at the FBI's headquarters.

Speakers ranging from an FBI lab technician to Attorney General Edwin Meese praised Webster for his personal integrity, his skill as a manager and his ability to restore confidence in the agency during his nine years as director.

"You have instilled confidence in the FBI among the American public and Congress," said Robert L. Gleason, a senior staff member in the FBI laboratory. "You provided the leadership necessary for us to achieve our goals."

John E. Otto, acting FBI director, said that "the permanent legacy that he (Webster) has left us is a sense of deep patriotism" and "our unending gratitude and respect."

Otto will remain as acting director until Meese and the White House agree on a nominee to head the agency. The search for a replacement for Webster has been going on for nearly three months; several potential nominees have declined the position.

Meese said in presenting Webster with an award that it was fitting that Webster was being honored in the year marking the 200th anniversary of the U.S. Constitution because Webster, as FBI director, helped "to preserve the concept of ordered liberty that has lasted for some 200 years."

Meese had refused to comment on when a nominee to replace Webster would be announced.

Webster told the 1,000-plus well-wishers that it had been "a tough decision" to leave St. Louis, where he was a U.S. appellate judge, and become FBI director in February 1978. But he said he has never regretted that decision.

Webster said the FBI had made strides in fighting terrorism, organized crime, drug trafficking, white-collar crime and other major problems during his tenure. "And much more remains to be done," he said.